

ABAP Site-Visit Guide

SECTION I. INTRODUCTION

The goal of the accreditation process is to determine if the applicant's psychoanalytic training program meets the accreditation standards of the American Board for Accreditation in Psychoanalysis, Inc. (ABAP, Inc.) and is eligible for either initial accreditation or reaccreditation.

The on-site evaluation visit provides essential data to assist ABAP, Inc. in reaching an accreditation decision through the discernment and recommendation of its Committee on Accreditation. Thus, the on-site evaluation review is designed to complement the institute's or program's self-study and to supply the data, which can be learned only via on-site observation, including discussions with faculty, administration, students, and other appropriate persons such as graduate analysts.

The on-site evaluation visit team serves as "the eyes and ears" of the Committee on Accreditation to gather the facts indicating whether a program's or institute's psychoanalytic training program is in compliance, partial compliance, or noncompliance with the accreditation standards of ABAP, Inc. The COA makes an evaluative discernment and recommendation to the Board of ABAP, Inc. based upon these facts which it forwards through a report to the Board of the agency, which then makes an accreditation decision and action either conferring accreditation or revoking accreditation.

This manual is to be used as a guide to ensure coverage of the many aspects of an institute's psychoanalytic training program. It is important to emphasize that the on-site evaluation review team members should conduct the on-site visit in a positive, constructive, and collegial manner and not as an adversary proceeding. It is in conjunction with this type of facilitative atmosphere that the various items referred to in this manual should be used, explored, and evaluated.

SECTION II. PRE-VISIT PROCEDURES

Well in advance of the on-site evaluation review, the Director of the Office of Accreditation, in close cooperation with the Chair of the Committee on Accreditation and the CEO of the applicant institute, appoints an on-site evaluation team, which will consist of three or more people. The Executive Director of Accreditation will designate the leader of the on-site evaluation team leader. The Director informs the institute or program in writing of the names and professional affiliations of the on-site evaluation team leader and the other team evaluators. The institute or program is invited to advise ABAP, Inc.'s Office of Accreditation if it believes any team member is not eligible to participate due to past, present, or anticipated affiliations with the institute, or due to any apparent conflict of interest.

The on-site evaluation team meets with the Director of the Office of Accreditation and the other on-site evaluation team members prior to the on-site visit. All materials pertinent to the on-site visit are reviewed. The Director instructs the on-site team members regarding their responsibility, including the importance of an open and continual dialogue between the visiting team and the faculty, administrative staff, students, and other appropriate persons. To assess the institute or program appropriately, the team should make a thorough review of the institute or program to ensure that the on-site evaluation team has a grasp of its strengths, weaknesses, and areas not in compliance with ABAP, Inc.'s accreditation standards. Hence, knowledgeability and competence are essential for each of the on-site evaluation team members.

SECTION III. PRE-VISIT RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE TEAM LEADER

After the institute or program has had an opportunity to comment on the composition of the on-site evaluation team, the team leader contacts the applicant institute's chief executive officer to arrange the date of the on-site visit. If, however, the self-evaluation submitted by the institute or program is not complete, the Director will work with the institute or program to gather supplementary data. The on-site evaluation visit is scheduled by the team leader after a satisfactory self-evaluation report is received.

The chief executive officer is provided with a copy of this manual and is advised in writing of the intended agenda by the on-site evaluation team so that the institute or program can arrange a schedule and the presence of appropriate individuals. The team leader may schedule a preliminary meeting with the applicant prior to the actual on-site visit. He/she should use the visit to further clarify the intent of the on-site visit and to develop a suitable site-visit agenda.

In order to maximize the use of time by the on-site evaluation team, it is recommended that, when applicant institutes or programs ordinarily convene classes in the afternoon, morning hours be used for contacts with available applicant staff such as administrative, non-academic persons who can discuss business and budgetary practices.

In general, an on-site evaluation visit does not last more than two days, depending on the size and complexity of the institute or program. Visits that require more than two days can be arranged with the approval of the Director of the Office of Accreditation.

SECTION IV. GUIDELINES FOR THE ON-SITE EVALUATION TEAM

The on-site evaluation team should remember that:

1. The on-site review team is a fact-finding body which provides ABAP, Inc. through its Committee on Accreditation with an in-depth report of the institute's or program's contributions and problems. The on-site review team may identify areas not in compliance with ABAP, Inc.'s standards
2. The rights and privileges of the institute or program are to be respected during the on-site visit. Although ABAP, Inc. is the standard-setting and accrediting body, the accreditation on-site review is done at the institute's or program's request, and the on-site evaluators should act in a courteous, professional, and considerate way. The evaluators are encouraged to be as unobtrusive as possible in classes, the library, and the treatment service so as not to disturb the usual operations of the institute or program.
3. The on-site review is an evaluation of the institute or program in light of its stated mission, goals, and objectives, and not a critique based on the evaluator's own training, beliefs, or school of psychoanalytic thought. The team should look to the validity and reliability of the institute's or program's goals (e.g., does a Freudian program demonstrate a Freudian learning matrix and do the products of this learning matrix repeatedly reflect this?). Suggested methods for arriving at this determination are as follows: evaluation of the library to determine if it is sufficiently representative of the program's school of psychoanalytic thought; analysis of students' assessment of their learning; evaluation of students' written material. The on-site evaluation team represents a variety of schools of psychoanalytic thought, and each evaluator is urged to be objective in his/her assessment, to function objectively and impartially, and to approach the on-site visit without predetermined conclusions.
4. During the on-site visit, the evaluation team interviews all appropriate groups and individuals, and then each member conducts a previously planned study of one or more facets of the institute or program such as the library, classrooms, clinic, administrative office, and files.

5. In particular, the views of faculty and students should be carefully elicited and noted. A significant item to discuss is the manner in which students' rights are safeguarded in all stages of training.
6. Every exhibit prepared by the institute or program should be examined by at least one member of the on-site evaluation team.
7. Financial reports and other pertinent documents should be read with care by the on-site evaluation team.
8. There should be an attempt to evaluate the actual educational process (what is happening to the student in the classroom, in field work, and in group and individual case supervision? Is the process effective and consistent with the institute's or program's purpose and goals?).
9. An exit visit with the chief executive officer and others whom he/she may invite should cover the major observations made by the team. This should not be merely a courtesy visit, but an in-depth discussion of all aspects of the visit. Ideally, all parties to this meeting should conclude that the best interests of the institute or program were considered by the evaluators.
10. The on-site team members should keep in mind that their written report will be made available to the chief executive officer of the visited institute or program following submission to ABAP, Inc. and its Committee on Accreditation.
11. As a reminder to the on-site evaluation team, and to supplement their narrative report, a "Checklist for Site Visitors" should be followed.

SECTION V. THE ON-SITE EVALUATION REPORT

Following the on-site visit, the evaluation team submits to the Executive Director of the Office of Accreditation a completed "Checklist" and a narrative report elaborating upon questions raised in the checklist. The report is primarily a fact-finding document whose purpose, along with the self-evaluation report and other materials, is to assist ABAP, Inc. in determining whether a program should be accredited.

The on-site evaluation team leader is responsible for submission of the report with the assistance of the team. The team members will submit their portion of the report to the team leader within fifteen (15) days of the on-site evaluation visit. The team leader will submit the summary report to the Executive Director of Accreditation within thirty (30) days of the on-site evaluation visit. The team leader is responsible for writing the introduction and conclusion, and should edit the entire report, rewriting the material submitted by any or all of the team to improve the clarity and unity of the document. The team report should respect the assessment of all members.

Upon receipt of the report, a copy is sent to the chief executive officer for review and comment as to the facts and other content therein. The response of the institute or program to the report will be available when the committee reviews the on-site evaluation team's report. The team leader or another member of the on-site evaluation team will be present when the Committee on Accreditation of ABAP, Inc. reviews the report.

The report is concerned largely with specific and unique characteristics of the institute or program and its program of instruction. The report sets forth the limitations and difficulties which the institute or program is experiencing and the plan and potential it has for overcoming them. It is important to make certain that the report reflects the extent to which the applicant meets or exceeds the accreditation standards of ABAP, Inc.

In its report, the on-site evaluation team should:

1. Evaluate the extent to which the institute or program complies with ABAP, Inc.'s standards, and areas in which it may be in partial compliance and need improvement or areas in which it may not be in compliance.

2. Note and highlight areas of strength.
3. Note areas where improvement may be indicated with constructive solutions.

The report is developed with all on-site evaluation team members so that the final report reflects the findings of the team. In preparing the report, it should be remembered that its purpose is to provide a fair and useful estimate of the effectiveness of an institute or program so that ABAP, Inc. may make an objective, fair, and rational decision on accreditation. The report does not make a unilateral recommendation to accreditation or denial of accreditation.